



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

A STORY OF CONVENT LIFE IN FAYAL, AZORES, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY.



THE following narrative from island chronicles will illustrate the lot of a gently-reared Azorean girl ninety years ago. People are still living who knew some of the actors in the drama of life of that period, and heard the story from the actors themselves.

The principal events here recorded happened in 1809, when, and for some time subsequently, the inclination of the wealthy people of Horta was to place their daughters in convents—a destiny which was generally contrary to the wishes of the girls, if they were even consulted on the matter. This easy method of disposal saved the rich all expense of maintenance, marriage portions, &c., and freed parents from responsibility. Indeed, it was not unusual for the women of a family to be considered as inconveniences; so they were confided to the abbesses, who took charge of them and their conduct—if they could. That the vigilance of an abbess was sometimes faulty the narrative proves.

Donna Rosa Lima de Mello—the daughter of Lino José de Mello and his wife Donna Isabel, people who derived a large income from their property, which consisted principally of excellent vineyards in the island of Pico—was one of the most noted beauties of Horta. When Donna Rosa came of age her father at once expressed a desire that she should enter the nunnery of Gloria; and, though he well knew the girl had a profound aversion for the cloister, he used such urgent entreaties, severe threats, and influence of every kind that the poor girl's home-life soon became almost unbearable. Her father said she was a flirt, who thought only of marriage, and for that reason did not care to take the veil; and he threatened he would sell all his property and squander his wealth, leaving her a disobedient and shameless beggar. In fact, the girl suffered constant torment.

The unhappy girl now appealed to esteemed

friends of a family named Sequeira for sympathy and help, disclosing all her troubles, which so aroused their pity that Senhor Sequeira ventured to remonstrate with the girl's father; but his praiseworthy efforts on behalf of Donna Rosa were futile. Lino José de Mello was inflexible in his purpose, and determined that at any cost his daughter should be a nun.

At length poor Donna Rosa, to free herself from the life of misery in her father's house, yet with the firm determination never to take the veil, retired to the Convent of Gloria as a novice, and remained there two years. She now gave many proofs of the earnestness of her character: she was kind and obedient to all the nuns, respectful to the old, and a good and pleasant companion for the young.

Except on the occasion of some Church festival, Lino José de Mello seldom visited the novice. He had no time to waste on his daughter, being always burdened with business and the care of his more important landed property. The mother, poor creature, tearfully deplored her daughter's sad lot, yet she dared not oppose her husband's wishes. In his family the husband's will was supreme; without opposition or restraint he controlled as he thought best the possessions he inherited or acquired, and also the destiny of every member of the family.

At last the stern and autocratic father declared that his daughter's novitiate had been too prolonged; that the time had arrived when she must take the veil and become a nun. The solemn ceremony of public profession of the faith was therefore arranged, with all the splendour and pomp befitting the wealth and importance of Lino José de Mello. But Donna Rosa had been secretly and constantly advised by friends of the family to declare that she did not wish to profess, and even to make this declaration during the religious ceremony if necessary.

The appointed and fateful day arrived, bringing a great bustle to the convent. All the priesthood

of the island had been invited to assist at the imposing ceremony; a sumptuous banquet was being prepared at Lino José's residence, and the bells of the convent filled the air with their loud and joyful peals.

All the arrangements were completed, and the priests were robing in the sacristy. The church of Gloria was filled to overflowing with spectators awaiting the religious rites. But now a graceful figure was indistinctly seen in the grated choir of the church in which the nuns took part in the solemn services! The figure came close up to the grating—it was the handsome Donna Rosa—and in a clear voice, which reached all those present, declared firmly, 'Be it known to every one that I do not wish to take the veil. They force me to it.'

An unusual and confused murmur arose throughout the building. The women left their seats on the floor to get a better view of the speaker, and the eyes of every one were fixed on the grating; the priests came to the door of the sacristy to ascertain what had occurred; and the men talked in loud whispers. A scandalous occurrence, in fact, had taken place.

Lino José de Mello, wearing a coat and waistcoat of rich Indian silk, knee-breeches and silken hose, silver-buckled shoes, and glittering sword, with cocked hat under his arm, was at that moment seated near the high altar upon one of the chairs he had provided for his guests and other important persons. At this unexpected development the inhuman father, his face white with rage, also rose, and, walking down the central aisle to the body of the church, called thence to his daughter that she must ask leave from the Mother Superior to be allowed to speak to him in the reception-room. Then, quickly leaving the church, by following the outer wall of the convent he made his way to a porch gay for the occasion with a floral arch, and, entering the house, soon reached the second floor, where his daughter—pale and nervous, and supporting herself with difficulty against the grating of the reception-room—awaited him.

Lino José de Mello now closed the door; then, unsheathing his sword, pointed and gleaming, he turned to his daughter and uttered these words: 'You will not take the veil? You are within your right; but I swear by these white hairs of mine that to-day, when you go home, I will bury this steel in your breast and will afterwards kill myself. Our fate is sealed; the shame will be but for a few hours. My curse be upon you!'

'I will take the veil,' exclaimed the terror-stricken girl; 'but I likewise swear to you, father, that it will only be for a short time.'

'Do as you please.'

Then they returned to their respective places in the church. Donna Rosa took the indispensable oath which gave away her bright young life, and

the ceremony continued without any further interruption. To all appearances she was resigned to her fate.

Some months later an English warship, a corvette, anchored in the Bay of Horta. It was then an old-established custom for foreigners arriving at Fayal to visit the nuns, a custom which was very pleasing and agreeable to the good women, as it broke the monotony of the cloister-life; and they invariably regaled the wearied mariners with sweetmeats and dainty luncheons.

The English corvette was delayed in harbour many days; and her captain, a handsome, well-built young man, was assiduous in his daily visits to the reception-room of the Gloria Convent, although the other officers would sometimes vary their walks by going as far as the Monastery of St John. The extraordinary beauty of Donna Rosa did not escape the gallant sailor's notice, and many were the conversations he had with her in French, a language they both knew well. Who knows what they were saying and how they planned?

The reception-room had two iron gratings, with the bars rather wide apart; and close by, let into the wall, was an upright revolving cylinder, having only one opening just wide enough to admit of the nuns placing therein abundant supplies of their sugared and other dainties, and giving the recipients space to take out the gifts when, and only when, the opening was turned towards them. Donors and receivers were alike invisible to each other.

During one of the captain's visits Donna Rosa handed to him, in the presence of the other nuns, a crystal plate containing a fine linen napkin and some sweetmeats; but when the plate came back to the interior of the convent there was a small steel file between the folds of the napkin. Not even the spies discovered the plot.

The corvette still lay at anchor in Horta Bay, although the supplies of fresh food and water for which she called at the island had been aboard several days.

One of Donna Rosa de Lima's companions in the convent was a nun about her own age, Donna Marianna Isabel Labath, who was of an illustrious Fayal family. Whether she entered the convent voluntarily or was forced into it we do not know; but certain it is that she was very anxious to leave it. Owing to their affinity of sentiment, she formed, whilst in the cloister, a very close friendship with the daughter of Lino José de Mello. They were almost inseparable, and talked together for hours in their respective cells.

As is well known to those who are acquainted with the locality, one of the wings of the Gloria Convent extends half-way along the narrow street named Travessa da Carrasca, having in its front only a high blank stone wall. This is still very lonely at night; but it was much more so at the period of which we write, the total absence of lamps and its narrowness causing it to be extremely

gloomy. The iron-barred window of Donna Rosa's cell was the second counting from the side of the Rua do Meio towards the old Rua da Misericordia, and it overlooked the Travessa da Carrasca.

It was a calm, dark night, the only light being from the stars, which shone vividly overhead. Midnight had already struck when some sailors from the corvette, accompanied by their captain, silently approached the convent along this Travessa. Some one expected them, without doubt, for the window of Donna Rosa's cell was at once raised with great caution, and, directly the individuals beneath were recognised, the rattle of the iron bars—some of which slipped through the rings surrounding them—was heard, and an aperture large enough to permit the passage of a woman's body was formed. When this was done a woman's voice from the window whispered to those below, in French, 'All is ready!'

The English sailors came close under the window of the cell, unfolded a large piece of sailcloth which they had brought from the ship, and held it up securely, breast-high. Then the captain, who had superintended all the preparations with the utmost care, called, 'Now!' Without further parley Donna Rosa at once threw herself from the window, which is about twenty-three feet above, into the road. The strain was great even for the sailors; but the men held on to the cloth tightly, so that, beyond being a little dazed from the fall, the fugitive happily suffered no hurt. She at once got up, took the English officer's arm, and they made their way together to the Rua do Meio.

The sailors evidently expected a second fugitive, as they resumed their former position and again stretched out the sail. Another nun, Donna Marianna Isabel Labath, then took up her position at the window, and, bending her body forward towards the road, was about to throw herself out as her companion had done; but she hesitated, said a few words in a tremulous voice to those awaiting her below, and withdrew. As she spoke to them in Portuguese, the sailors were unfortunately unable to understand her. What Donna Marianna had really said was that she feared to take so dangerous a leap, and that they must wait whilst she tore up the sheets from her friend's bed and made a rope with which to let herself down. However, the doing of this took some time; and Donna Rosa de Lima and the captain of the corvette, dreading an awkward encounter with the people of the town, continued on their way in the direction of the sea, leaving Donna Marianna up in her dark cell preparing the means of descent. Evidently she was delayed in her preparations; and the sailors, being ignorant of what she had said, and not seeing her again, naturally thought she must have relinquished all intention of escaping. Hearing footsteps in the distance, and fearing discovery, they started off in haste after their captain.

There was no time to be lost; the ship's boat, which awaited them just off the shore in front of the chapel of Boa Viagem, came close to the beach, and they quickly stepped on board. The captain was standing in the stern, and the fugitive was seated near him. The boat was pulled off at once to the corvette, whose twinkling lights were visible out in the middle of the bay.

In the convent Donna Marianna had at last succeeded in fashioning a rope from two sheets; and, thinking the sailors still awaited her below, she tied one end of the rope to a bar of the window and commenced sliding down. But when half-way to the ground the knot joining the two sheets gave way, and the poor nun fell to the ground. Fortunately the weeds under the convent walls grew tall and thick, and saved her from very severe injuries. As it was, she was badly bruised, and, completely deserted, was unable for the moment to decide what to do. Her injuries, though painful, did not as yet hinder her from walking; and, knowing that the Boa Viagem was the place agreed upon for embarking, she started off in that direction. Down the Travessa da Carrasca and across the Rua do Meio, Travessa da Boa Viagem, and the wide stretch of sandy beach she struggled in the hope of overtaking her friend. When, breathless and in great pain, she reached the water's edge, she could just discern the outline of a boat disappearing in the distance, and she called to those on board for help, but they were already too far away to hear her.

Not one solitary light was visible in any of the houses which face Horta Bay, and, except for the cry of some nocturnal sea-bird, the beach was as silent and lonely as the grave. The poor girl was lost, abandoned, and she wept bitterly over her misfortune. Where to go or what to do she could not imagine. It occurred to her to return to the convent. But how was she to do so? The knotted sheets had parted; one, being tied to the broken bars, fluttered far out of her reach, like a streamer in the wind. She thought also of putting shame aside and going home to knock for admittance; but at this season of the year all the members of the family were attending to the grape harvest over in Pico, and the house was empty.

Benumbed with fear and bathed in tears, the unhappy girl sought shelter beneath the arcade of the market, at a short distance from the chapel of Boa Viagem. Fortunately at that season the nights were short. Within a few hours some one would be certain to find her there, and would perhaps afford her the necessary help in her distress. And so it happened.

Francisco do Conto, an attorney's clerk, and the father of three nice, merry girls, was a habitual early riser. On this morning he left his house at dawn and walked as far as the Boa Viagem, whence he could look out on the bay and see if any ships had come to anchor during the

night, or if the fishermen had returned with their usual supply of fish for the town. Neither one nor the other was to be seen; what he felt was a sharp, cold wind nipping his nose and finger-tips. Sneezing and coughing, he also sought shelter beneath the market archway, as Donna Marianna had done; and he had not been there many moments when from the far corner he heard a woman's sighs and groans.

Distance and the dim light of dawn prevented his discerning any one; but on approaching the opposite end of the arches he was amazed to find a nun stretched upon the ground, with her head resting against the wall. An explanation at once ensued. Donna Marianna told him, with full particulars, all that had happened, and with clasped hands begged him to help her in her misfortune.

Francisco do Conto, who had a kind heart, whilst listening to the nun's story and to all the details of her adventure, sometimes felt inclined to laugh and at others to cry.

'Bless us!' said he, 'don't be weeping like a Magdalen, Donna Marianna Labath; women are always doing foolish things. But, after all, what can't be cured must be endured. Come along with me and I will take you to my house.'

'God repay you, Senhor Francisco do Conto; I am very unhappy—very. But they enticed me.'

'Yes, yes, yes! You all do what you can. However, we won't discuss that now. Let us get along to my house; it is only two steps from here.'

'Oh, what a disgrace! My God, what a disgrace!'

'All within my doors are of the female sex, so come along from here, senhora.'

'But I find it hard to walk, Senhor Francisco. I bruised one of my feet during the night, and it is paining me dreadfully. God help me!'

'Now, that is very awkward. I can't carry you on my back, nor yet in my arms, being too old for such feats; just try to support yourself by leaning against me.'

'Our Lady help me! What pain! Oh, I cannot!'

Fortunately at this juncture two fishermen appeared on their way to market with a large basket of fish. Francisco do Conto called to them.

'Here, boys, come and give me a hand.'

The fishermen put down their basket against the wall and approached, but stopped in astonishment when they saw a nun at that hour and in that place.

'*A largato!* Look there—a nun!' said one.

'Take hold of that arm whilst I help her on this side, and let us be going on,' replied Senhor Francisco do Conto.

'And what if some one comes and steals our fish?'

The second fisherman at once came to assist, calling to his companion:

'Come on, man, and help this little nun; the gentleman will pay everything—bushels of money if necessary. Tell us, Senhor Francisco, how did the holy sister get here?'

'That's no business of yours. Now, hurry on.'

When they arrived at Senhor Francisco's house he gave them some coppers with which to buy *aqua-ardente*.

'Praised be the Holy Ghost! When Senhor Francisco wants us to carry off any more nuns he has only to say so and we're ready. Just ask for Little Woodenhead and Cocoon—those are the names we are known by; or, if we are at sea, ask for Ill-wed, the Doctor, the Cutter, the Parrot, or the Scamp—they all belong to our crew.'

'That will do; now take yourselves off, and may Old Nick go with you.'

'Yes, sir, and thank you; and may it all be for the love of God.'

On their arrival at his hospitable home Francisco do Conto placed the nun in his daughters' care, and went to advise the father confessor, Padre Silva, of what had occurred, as that good man, so celebrated for his prudence and discretion, would be better able than himself to extricate the poor lady from the present or any other difficulty.

The *padre* listened to the narrative patiently and without any signs of anger, saying at last, 'I will be at your house directly, Senhor Francisco. Will you hurry back, and on your way call on the surgeon, Zepherino Gonçalves? It will be best for him to put in an appearance as well; he is an experienced man, and one who can keep his own counsel. In any case, the least noise possible about this most perplexing business the better.'

In a little over half-an-hour the priest, the doctor, and the master of the house to which Donna Marianna had been taken were assembled in the latter's little sitting-room discussing what they should do with the nun.

'My opinion is that she ought to return to the convent at once,' said the priest.

'Certainly,' agreed the doctor; 'but the worst of that is, she will be put into the dungeon straight away, with a trial to follow after.'

'The case is serious; undoubtedly it is,' added Francisco do Conto.

'But how do you find her in health, doctor? Does she feel the effects of the fall much?'

'I examined her, Senhor Padre; but, apart from the fatigue caused by the loss of a night's rest, found little wrong with her. The bruised foot is of no consequence; it is merely sore, and will soon be right and ready for another such escapade.'

'How sad to think that the poor nun will have to go to prison!'

'But what else can be done, Senhor Francisco do Conto? I see no help for it.'

'Pardon me,' rejoined the priest; 'but our doctor could prevent that.'

'I? How so? I don't govern in the convent.'

'That's so; but if you pretended that Donna Marianna had a dangerous illness, or that some serious accident had befallen her, they would let her remain in her cell to be taken care of, instead of putting her below in prison; and, as the convent doctor, you could go and visit her now and then whilst the illness lasted, which might be long. Meanwhile matters would cool down, and we could concoct some scheme for the future.'

'Happy thought!' exclaimed the master of the house.

'These confounded nuns are the plague of my life,' said the doctor; 'the lies they have made me tell are more in number than the hairs I have on my head—think of that now!'

'Yet what can you do, doctor? It would be cruelty to put the poor girl into the dungeon.'

'Senhor Padre is very fond of overlooking faults—that's why the nuns behave as they do; but still, on account of the esteem in which I hold you, I will take a share in this scheme and certify what you please. Donna Marianna must get ready to return to the convent whilst it is still early, as a crowd would collect later. Oh, these nuns! these nuns! They will be the death of me!'

'You are a terrible grumbler, doctor; but in spite of that you've a heart of gold.'

'Much you know about it. As soon as this breeze is over you will return quietly to your homes; I have to put up with their worrying. Immediately they see me in the convent they commence to pour out their tales of woe. One says she feels cold, the other feels hot; one is always sneezing, another never stops coughing; there's no end to their complaints. It is simply infernal.'

Notwithstanding all this Francisco do Conto went to call up a sedan-chair, into which the fugitive stepped. Escorted by her three generous protectors, she returned to the Gloria Convent, and after knocking at the gate, was cautiously admitted and allowed to take refuge at once within her cell, as the doctor said she had broken a leg and was dangerously ill.

At that time there was a good little woman in the convent, a professed nun, named Donna Maria Aurora, who belonged to the Rocha family of Horta. This lady, moved by a feeling of genuine pity, and believing with all sincerity in the illness of her companion, Donna Marianna Labath, begged so urgently, in spite of the refusals of the supposed sick lady, to be allowed to spend the nights in the latter's cell and to attend on her continually, whilst the sickness lasted that she obtained her wish.

Very soon, however, when living with her patient, Donna Maria found out the trick of the fractured leg; but the knowledge only caused her to redouble her kindness to her sister of the cloister. She would even accompany her in the dead of night for a little walk in the convent garden or the cemetery, since Donna Marianna continued to spend the weary days upon her bed, receiving frequent and inquisitive visits from the different persons in the convent.

On the night following that of the escape of the two nuns, some boys carried off one of the fishing-boats from the beach, and, placing it outside the convent gates, left it there propped up straight, with the oars in their places and an English flag hoisted at the stern! The next morning everybody who saw it laughed at the spectacle, and there was not a nun who didn't peep through her grated window to see the fun. Some of these got angry, others took the matter as a joke; but the poor fishermen, swearing worse than lost souls, had to carry back their boat to the water when they wanted to go to sea. Some lampoons in verse appeared posted at street corners, causing the nuns much bitterness of heart and provoking hilarity amongst the townspeople.

The affair was so much commented upon throughout the whole island that an investigation of the matter was ordered by the religious authorities; yet, notwithstanding the inquiry, the publicity of the occurrence, the lampoons, the scandal, everything in fact, Donna Marianna Labath did not spend one single hour in the convent dungeon. Dr Zepherino said the broken leg was obstinately slow in setting, and that the treatment would have to be continued for many months; perchance he might have to saw off the limb, just as a branch is sawn from a mighty tree. It was a day of sorrow in the convent when the old doctor said this; all the nuns consoled with the sick girl, and many were the kindnesses lavished upon her.

Months passed by, and finally Donna Marianna went about freely throughout the whole establishment. Many and great were the proofs of friendship which she received from Donna Maria Aurora after the unfortunate night of her flight. They became inseparable friends; and when, years afterwards, convents were abolished by the State the two continued to live together in the outer world.

Donna Maria Aurora Rocha died in June 1865, at the age of seventy-five, surrounded by the respect and esteem due to a lady of exalted and incontestable virtues; poor Donna Marianna having predeceased her on the 11th of April 1862, when eighty-five years of age. During the closing days of the latter's life she became a religious monomaniac, with intervals of complete mental alienation.

Donna Rosa de Lima was relatively happy. At the time of her elopement the local authorities

complained to the General of the district, resident in Angra, Terceira, who in his turn addressed himself officially to the British Government, denouncing the fact that an officer of the Royal Navy of that country had been involved in these unseemly adventures. The English Government paid due attention to the complaint; a court-martial was held in London upon the matter, with the result that the captain of the corvette had to suffer, as punishment, being stationed for two years in the Mediterranean, one of the pleasantest places in the world. Naturally enough Donna Rosa spent a portion of those two years

in Italy, and at various other places on the shores of that beautiful sea. When the term of her lover's punishment had expired he returned to England and there married her, surrounding her with everything conducive to happiness and comfort. He attained the high post of Admiral in the British Navy, and died at an advanced age.

Within recent years Senhor Francisco Antonio da Silveira went over from Fayal to England on a visit to his then widowed aunt and her only child. Her long life has also come to a close since then. Would she perchance have been happier in the convent?

OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE.

CHAPTER XX.—A WIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE.



VERY vestige of the storm had swept out of the sky before sunset, and the wind died away, though the sea was still heavy and sulky.

We were pacing the deck, enjoying the wide horizon and the brighter aspect of things, when one of the men suddenly sang out, 'Steamer astern, sir,' and Lyle came out with his glasses to inspect her. All we could see, however, was a plume of black smoke rising against the soft mother-of-pearl tints of the western sky.

'A steamer, certainly,' said Lyle; 'probably one of the West Indian boats. We're about in their track. We shall see her again to-morrow most likely. Ah, there's dinner, and I'm about ready for it. It'll be quite a treat to eat without the fiddles on.'

Denise was in better spirits now that we were really on the way home, but every now and again she fell thoughtful, and I knew she was troubled about Vaurel and Lepar.

As for me, that plume of black smoke against the pale sky was constantly in my mind, but it was only when Denise had retired for the night that my thoughts came to a head and took definite shape. I had a talk with Lyle, and a proper legal consultation with Dayrell, and then my mind was made up, and I saw my way out of one at least of our difficulties.

When Denise came on deck next morning we were going only half-speed, and the West Indian man was toiling up about four miles astern.

'She's catching us,' said Denise, stopping to watch her.

'Yes; we're allowing her to.'

'Oh—why?'

'Because, my dear, she will help us out of one of our difficulties, and save us going to Southampton at all, and so shorten the time it will take us to get to Vaurel.'

'How, Hugh?' she said, looking somewhat startled.

'As soon as she draws abreast of us, you and I and Dayrell will go on board of her and ask the Captain to marry us.'

'Oh Hugh!'

'Yes, dear, I know. But if you think it over for a minute or two, you will see that it is the very best thing we can do.'

'But I have no clothes.'

'You look lovely in these.'

And so she did, in her blue dress, and the reefer jacket and blue stocking-cap in which she had come on board at St Malo; but she looked down at herself and made a whimsical face.

'We will leave Dayrell on board if they will have him, and then we'll steam straight for St Nazaire and Vaurel. I know you are full of anxiety about him and the Colonel.'

'Yes,' she said, and pondered deeply.

'I could get some things at Nantes,' she said presently.

'Of course, while we are coaling. I thought of that.'

The pretty brow was wrinkled and the ripe red lips pressed tight with the weight of her thoughts, but at last she said consentingly, though not by any means effusively, which, no doubt, would have been too much to expect, 'Perhaps it is the best thing we can do.'

'I'm sure of it. I have been thinking of it all night.'

'Are you quite sure the Captain can marry us all right?'

'Quite sure. The captain of a ship can do pretty much anything he chooses.'

'But will it be all proper and legal?'

'Quite. I knew it was so, but to make quite sure I consulted Dayrell and Lyle before I decided to propose it to you, and they confirm me.'

'I must get a hat from somewhere,' she said.

'Don't,' I said. 'You look just lovely in that toque.'

'Think of being married in a sailor's stocking-cap,' she said.

'You can take it off during the ceremony.'

'Is it a passenger-ship?'

'Yes—a West Indian liner.'

'And there will be women on board?'

'Most likely.'

'And they'll all be laughing at me.'

'Not a bit of it. You'll create such a sensation that they'll all be jealous, and all the men will be envying me.'

'But I don't want to create a sensation.'

'You can't help it, my dear, unless you hide your pretty head in a bag.'

'How soon will the steamer be up to us?'

'We can bring her up in half-an-hour by slowing down.'

'Give me a little longer and I'll go down and get ready;' and, with another thoughtful look at the approaching vessel, she went slowly down the companion.

'Bend on a signal that we want to speak to them, Lyle,' I said. 'Mademoiselle will be ready in an hour. And you might tell Barnes to drop the gig into the water, and let the boat's crew tog themselves out in their best. We may as well make as good a show as we can.'

'Mademoiselle makes no objections?' he asked, with a smile.

'She sees with me that it is the best thing to be done, and so she consents. Dayrell, my boy, we shall miss your cheerful face as much as those troublesome clients in Lincoln's Inn must have done. Have you any packing to do?'

'Tooth-brush; that's about all. I'm an ocean tramp.'

'You'll enjoy yourself on that West Indiaman.'

'I've enjoyed myself here,' he said heartily.

'I had no expectation of such a high old time when I left London. I only hope there are no rewards out for me.'

'You search the papers carefully when you get home. Maybe you'll have a chance of some good fat libel suits; then you'll feel that your time hasn't been altogether wasted.'

'Hmph! I'd sooner fight another man's libel suit than my own any day;' and he also went down to make his preparations.

The steamer had acknowledged our signals, and as she drew nearer we saw her sides lined with expectant faces, while the officers on the bridge ogled us with their glasses and tried to make out what was wrong with us.

While she was still somewhat astern of us I went downstairs and tapped on Denise's door. She opened it at once, and her jewel of a face was all a-sparkle between tears and laughter.

I stepped inside, and took the lovely rosy face between my hands and kissed her fervently.

'May God bless you, dearest,' I said, and meant it, with my whole heart and soul. 'And now let us go.'

As we came on deck the men gave a ringing cheer; and when Dayrell, before stepping down into the boat, handed each man a sovereign, as a wedding present, he explained, from him to them, they gave him another cheer for himself. Then as we pushed off they cheered and cheered again, and waved good luck with their caps, and we rowed out into the steamer's course. Presently she came up like a moving mountain, all a-bristle with white faces and staring eyes and craning necks, and threw us a rope, and we drew in to where a gangway, leading up into a dark square hole in her side, had been dropped for us.

We were received by an officer who eyed us with much curiosity. All that he said, however, was, 'Captain Rougvie is on the upper deck,' and led the way there at once.

We issued from the companion into the midst of a crowd of passengers with their faces all full of questions, and Captain Rougvie came forward to meet us.

He was a cheery old Scot, with kindly blue eyes and a grizzled brown face, and the homely inflections of his voice as soon as he opened his mouth were like music to my ear.

'Weel, sir? Your servant, ma'am. I thought 'twas all men ye were in the boat. And what can I do for ye? Is't coal ye want? I'm afraid we canna spare any. I'm sorry, but'—

'That's very good of you, Captain, but it's not coal. Can we say a word to you in private?' For the inquisitive gaze of something over a hundred eyes was somewhat discomposing to Denise.

'Surely,' said the Captain, and he led us along the deck to his cabin under the bridge.

'My name, Captain Rougvie,' I said, 'is Hugh Lamont, and the yacht yonder is mine. I come from Greenock'—

'I ken ye,' he said. 'I'm frae Port-Glasgow myself. Ye're the laddie that jumped into the sea after the auld Yankee, and he left ye a mint o' money. I'm verra pleased to meet ye, Mr Lamont;' and he shook me warmly by the hand.

'This young lady is Mademoiselle des Comptes of Cour-des-Comptes in Brittany.'

'Pleased to meet you, miss;' and he shook hands with Denise.

'My friend here is Mr George Dayrell of Lincoln's Inn, London. He is also my solicitor.'

'Pleased to meet you, sir, though I'm no' keen on lawyers as a rule,' said the Captain, and shook hands with Dayrell.

'What mademoiselle and I have come to ask you to do for us, Captain, is to marry us.'

'Dooms!' said Captain Rougvie in very great astonishment.

'We were crossing from St Malo to Southampton to be married there when the gale caught us and we had to run for it.'

'And can ye no' go back now and be married?'

'We can, of course, but we don't want to, for this reason. We ought to have kept a most important appointment down near Nantes yesterday morning. Our not having done so may be upsetting plans on which very grave consequences depend, and every hour we are away may make matters worse. If you will do what we want, we shall also ask you to give Mr Dayrell passage to London, and then we shall go full steam for Nantes, and so we can save at least a couple of days. It is a matter of most extreme urgency. I should probably not be far wrong in saying it is a matter of life or death;' and I saw Dayrell prick up his ears.

'Weel, weel!' said the old man, regarding Denise with a fatherly eye, 'I've had bairns on board, and many a burying, but I never had a marriage. And it's your wish, young ledly?'

'Yes, Captain, if you will be so good.'

'I suppose I have the right?' he said, turning to Dayrell.

'Yes; you have the right, Captain. And I have the special license we got for use in Southampton. But you won't need that. All you have to do is to make an entry in your logbook, and forward a copy of it to the Board of Trade, and Mr and Mrs Lamont will be tied up as tight as if the Archbishop of Canterbury had done it in Westminster Abbey. I'll see to all that for you.'

'Then I'll do it, Mr Lamont,' he said; and with a twinkle of pleasure in his eye, he added, "'It is na for your silver bright, but for your winsome ledly.'"

'When'll it be?' he asked.

'Just as soon as you like, Captain. We've been ready these three days past.'

'My! This'll set the ship agog. We've had a pretty tough time lately; broke a blade off our propeller two days ago—that's why we can't get on any faster. You won't mind the ladies coming to the wedding, miss?' he asked anxiously.

'Oh no, I suppose not, Captain,' said Denise; 'but it will have to be a very quiet wedding, for I haven't got any wedding garments, you see.'

The Captain grew thoughtful. Whether he was trying to puzzle out why Denise was so ill-provided, or whether he was wondering how he could make good the deficiency, I could not be sure. It was the latter, however.

'We'll want just a wee bit time to get ready,' he said. 'Your boat can keep up with us, I suppose, Mr Lamont?'

'Easily, Captain. She can do sixteen knots.'

'That's all right; then we'll be losing no time, and you not much, if you stop on board for a bit. We can't make above twelve. You'll stop with us, then, and I'll introduce you to some of my passengers. They'll be delighted at the idea of a wedding. We'll have it in the afternoon, and in the evening after dinner we'll have a dance on deck. I was just wanting something to waken things up. This is grand. I'm really very

much obliged to you for coming and suggesting it.'

'It is we who are under very great obligations to you, Captain,' I said, 'and any arrangements you make will please us.'

'Permit me, ma'n'selle,' he said, and bent down and crooked his arm towards her with old-fashioned courtesy. Denise rose and took it, looking somewhat bewildered, and he led her out and along the deck, we following.

'I will put you in charge of Señora del Caltera,' said Captain Rougvie. 'She'll be delighted. She is the daughter of the governor of Porto Rico, just married herself, and going home on her wedding trip. She's been finding it gey dull, and this'll do her good.'

He led Denise along to a group of men who stood talking round a lady lying in a deck-chair. The group opened as we came up, and they all eyed us with much curiosity; the lady, who had very brilliant black eyes and a dark vivacious face, regarding Denise much as she might have inspected a new zoological specimen brought along for her inspection.

'Señora,' said the Captain, 'we are going to have a wedding on board, and this lady is the bride.'

'Ah, Señor Capitan,' she cried, jumping up with a clap of the hands and her eyes snapping, 'you are dear good man. If I had chosen I would not have ask anything better.—My dear,' she said, taking Denise by both hands, with an assumption of motherliness which was infinitely amusing, for there could not have been many months between the girls' ages, 'I am sharmed. It has been ver dull.—Manuel, a chair for the señorita,' she said quickly in Spanish; and one of the gentlemen, who was evidently her husband from the way she ordered him about, hastened to stretch a chair for Denise's use.—'Now, you others, run away, while the señorita and I arrange things;' and in two minutes they were chattering away in French like a pair of magpies, while Dayrell and I were welcomed by the men, who had evidently found the voyage almost as dull as had the señora herself.

There were several Spaniards among them, but the greater number were Englishmen—planters from the islands, merchants, government officials, and so on, and they were all very pleasant and friendly.

As the matter had to be explained, I told them of our adventure and the reason for our coming on board, and they became still more hospitable; and as it seemed too bad that Lyle should be missing all the fun, I begged Captain Rougvie's permission to have him across also.

'Why, certainly, Mr Lamont; ask your skipper to come aboard at once. I'm quite sure he's a decent fellow or you wouldn't have him running your boat for you.'

So I called down to Barnes, who was towing alongside all this time, to go back to the yacht and beg the Captain to join us on board the liner,

and to state that he, Barnes, would take charge of the schooner.

'Hugh!' came to my ears from the direction of the ladies, and I found Denise beckoning to me. 'Señora del Caltera desires to make your acquaintance.'

I bowed before the gleaming face and murmured my gratification in French.

'I spik English, sare,' she said. 'I am sharmed to make ze acquaintance of your beautiful vife.'

'That is very kind of you, I'm sure. Mademoiselle has been pining for the sight of a lady's face for three days past.'

'Ah yes, I am zure!' she said, with a merry laugh and an arch look; 'but it is ver dull, ver triste, when ze sea is way op zere'—pointing half-way up the sky—'and ze ship she roll ovaire and ovaire and everybody is seek—oh, so seek!—ugh!' and she crumpled up her face in a grimace which expressed her feelings fully.

'And your friend?' she said, looking towards Dayrell. 'He is merry boy. I will know him also.'

I called Dayrell and presented him in due form.

'*Mais, mon dieu,*' she said, turning to Denise, '*qu'est ce que c'est que ça*—Linkonsinfels?'

Denise explained the point to her, and she was pleased to say that all the *avocats* she had met had been very nice men and very good company.

I told her that Dayrell would remain in the ship when we went away, and she said, 'Ah, zat is good. I am glad. I am tired of my hussband—*tiens!*' tapping Denise merrily on the arm, 'I should not said zat to you, *ma petite*. All same, we shall be goot friends, Mistaire Day-rel-Linkonsinfels. You will amuse me, is it not so?'

'I shall be delighted,' said Dayrell, and he evidently looked upon himself as in for an unusually good time, and I hoped he would not get into any mischief.

'Ah, lonch!' cried the senora as the gong rang through the ship. 'We will go together, *ma chérie*, and afterwards we will see,' and she nodded her smart little head many times very knowingly.

The time came round at last when I stood in the saloon, with Dayrell and Lyle by my side as best men, awaiting my bride.

The passengers clustered thick along the side seats, and the doorways were blocked with stewards and stewardesses and surreptitious passengers from the other end of the ship, all wide-eyed and expectant. Captain Rougvie stood in the space between the two centre tables before an improvised reading-desk, over which were draped the Union-jack and the French tricolor. He looked distinctly nervous, and when he wasn't looking anxiously towards the door of the saloon, he was glancing over the words

of the marriage service, so that they should run free and smooth when the time came; for, as he explained again afterwards, he had never had occasion to use it before, and it was not at all familiar to him. And, indeed, I may say that when the time did come he boggled at some parts as though they astonished him, and it was with difficulty that he got through.

We stood waiting so long in that state of nervous discomfort which a wait under such circumstances always accentuates, that if we had been ashore I might have feared that something untoward had happened to the bride's horses, or that her heart had failed her at the last minute, or that 'Young Lochinvar' had unexpectedly come upon the scene. But of the two latter possibilities I had no fear, and here on board ship the first was out of question, and I could not understand what was keeping them. But that was because I did not understand the Señora del Caltera; as, indeed, how should I, seeing that I had not known her half a day?

It was all arranged by that vivacious young lady to satisfy her sense of the fitness of things and to give it due effect, and it was only when the Captain, in his nervousness, was looking round for some one to send to inquire if they intended coming at all that a buzz rose in the farther passage, and swelled, and burst out all round the room; and everybody stood up and craned their necks, and the little mobs in the other doorways exploded into the saloon by reason of those behind them who insisted on seeing.

And when I raised my eyes my heart leaped up into my throat and stuck there for a moment, till my eyes grew moist and dim, so that I could scarcely see the radiant vision that came slowly along between the tables towards me.

My wife has always been the loveliest woman in all the world to me, and in her stocking-cap and reefer coat no other woman ever could compare with her. But never tell me that clothes can't add to beauty.

Here was no stocking-cap and reefer jacket, but in their place a stately vision of shimmering white silk which trailed along the floor behind her and added to her height, and billowing lace which enveloped her like a halo from head to foot, and hid and heightened all her beauty. A tiny spray of orange-blossom gathered the lace on the shining coils of her hair and added the one touch of colour—until she drew near and raised her eyes to mine, and then, through the dimness of my own full eyes, I looked into hers, my love, my bride, and all the glories of heaven shone upon me.

I remember that I almost feared to take her hand—there was a sense of sacrilege in it—till she put it trustfully into mine, and we stood before the Captain, who was almost as much taken aback as I was at this transformation-scene.

The señora, I believe, stood behind us, mothering the bride, and coruscating with delight like a pin-wheel, I am sure, for that state lasted in her all the rest of the day.

But I did not see her then, nor any one at all but Denise and the honest grizzled face of Captain Rougvié, and I have little recollection of the service; but I have George Dayrell's word for it that everything was done correctly and in order, and that we were tied as tight, as he said, as the Archbishop himself could have done it in Westminster Abbey.

Señora Fireworks behind had held herself in during the ceremony with difficulty, and when it was finished, and Captain Rougvié, beaming a speechless benediction, had shaken us both very heartily by the hand, and, after the manners and customs of his country, had given Denise a very hearty kiss which took her very much by surprise, we none of us knew exactly what to do next, for the position was unique for most of us. Dayrell, indeed, looked as if he knew what he would like to do, and the señora looked as though she feared the epidemic might spread her way, and so she solved the difficulty by going off with a whizz and a bang.

She sprang up, her dark eyes blazing with enjoyment, whirled her arms like the sails of a windmill, and cried, 'Heep, heep, 'rah!' at the top of her voice. The Anglo-Saxons in the crowd responded lustily, and gave it with such a swing that the Spaniards' faces puckered at the noise, and we were all very jolly and happy.

Then the stewards came in masterfully and made it plain to us that they would prefer our room to our company, as they had business of importance on hand. So we all went up on deck, and found it covered in, above and about, with canvas, while lanterns, plain and coloured, hung all round in profusion and transformed the work-a-day deck into fairyland.

And there Denise held a reception, for the señora was Mistress of the Ceremonies and insisted on it; and I think every soul on board, and every man who could be spared from the *Clutha*, attended it.

Then at last the dinner-gong rang out a new triumphant note and summoned us to the wedding feast. And it was a feast indeed, with a most miraculously compounded wedding-cake which did the cook infinite credit; and he watched our appreciation of it from one of the doorways, and retired satisfied with himself and his handiwork and with us.

And so the merry feast progressed, with much popping of corks and much laughter, and finally with one or two brief speeches.

Somewhat similar doings, on a smaller scale, were taking place in the forecabin and in the men's quarters, and the whole ship held high festival.

Then the ship's band played under the awning,

not altogether untunefully, and what they lacked in skill they made up for in good-will; and some of the ladies danced, with the officers and the Spaniards and some of the planters and government men as partners. Presently Denise and the señora slipped away; and when my dear one came back, dressed in her own clothes and the reefer coat and stocking-cap, I knew it was time to go.

But getting away was no easy matter, for every one wanted to shake us by the hand and wish us good luck; and Captain Rougvié vowed that the obligation was all on his side, and that he had never enjoyed himself so much. George Dayrell gave us his blessing with paternal unction; and Señora del Caltera positively shed tears as she kissed Denise many times on both cheeks, and made her promise to call on her if ever she came to Madrid. And so at last the liner's siren bellowed to the yacht to stop for us; the yacht replied with a shrill squeak, and we found ourselves dancing on the glinting dark water, with the leviathan towering above and watching our passage with its rows of gleaming eyes.

A squeak from the yacht told them we had arrived, and then boom went the liner's signal-gun, and a flight of rockets brought us more good wishes. Then the big ship bellowed 'Goo-oo-oo-d-bye! Goo-oo-oo-oo-oo-d-bye!' till she seemed to be in mortal agony, and the very stars seemed to shudder at the sound; and our shrill pipe, which must have sounded to them like a small boy blowing into a key, squeaked back, 'Thanks! thanks! thanks! thanks! thanks!'

Then we turned our prow to the east and put on steam, and the long line of lights grew smaller and smaller, became a yellow blur, and passed out of sight. Denise and I stood watching them, our hearts too full for speech.

I had now to explain my further plans to Andrew Lyle. Our first kidnapping venture had been entirely successful. The next was of a different kind, and might possibly entail pains and penalties, the extent of which I could not gauge, as I had not cared to enter into the matter with Dayrell at all. True, the Colonel was a murderer and worse, for I count the man who conspires to ruin another's reputation and condemns him to a lifelong agony, worse by far than he who strikes down his victim and ends him. But even a murderer has his rights, and we had deprived him of those rights, and intended still to do so, in order to serve our own private ends. And although those ends might be for the righting of a great wrong, we were doing an absolutely illegal thing, and doing it with our eyes open.

When the table was cleared next morning, I asked Lyle to come back after he had been up on deck to cast his eye around; then I dismissed the steward, and told the Captain the whole story so far as it was known to us.

He was immensely interested, and upheld our position entirely.

'The man deserves no mercy, Mr Lamont,' he said warmly. 'And if I can help you to wring the truth out of him, I'm entirely at your service.'

'Where can we stow him? I don't want him anywhere here.'

'I'll see to that. He can have the engineer's cabin. Macpherson won't mind bunking forward under the circumstances. And when we've got him safe aboard where do you think of taking him to, Mr Lamont?' he asked.

'Well, I'm not quite decided. It really matters very little so long as we hold him without any risk of interference from the outside.'

I caught Denise's eyes fixed upon me with a strange, wistful look in them.

'Your wish is granted, dearest, whatever it is,' I said, laying my hand on her slim white one with its new broad gold band which I had bought in London, and which fitted marvellously.

'Could we—oh, could we?'—she said with a catch in her voice—'could we go to New Caledonia?'

'We can go anywhere where there is water to float us,' said Lyle stoutly.

'Then to New Caledonia we will go,' I said, and the diamond drops sparkled in my sweet wife's eyes once more.

'When Gaston is free and cleared of all stain I shall have nothing left to wish for,' she said.

'Truth will out, Mrs Lamont,' said the Captain vehemently. 'It never can be hid in this world—at least,' he added cautiously, 'not often. And we'll have it out of this man if we have to— Well, anyhow, we'll get it,' he concluded, with a clenching of the strong brown hand on the table.

But my wife's heart and my own were heavy with anxiety as to what might have happened at Cour-des-Comptes or elsewhere through our failure to be at the appointed place at the appointed time.

It was midday on Thursday when Croisic Point hove in sight, and an hour later the *Clutha* was moored alongside the coaling-shed at

St Nazaire with orders to cram in every pound that could be got into her bunkers in as short a time as possible, and Denise and I were jogging along towards Nantes as fast as a very slow train could take us.

Denise managed to purchase a flat straw hat in St Nazaire, and as the air of the land felt mild to our weather-beaten frames, she was able to discard the reefer jacket also, and, in great contentment, declared that she felt clothed like a Christian once more.

We must have been a godsend to the millinery shops of Nantes that afternoon, and the smiles and salaams which followed us right out on to the side-walks testified to the high appreciation in which we were held.

But what with the multitude of our calls, and the number of return calls we had to make to see that orders and alterations had been properly carried out, the afternoon was soon gone; and after a hastily enjoyed dinner at the Hôtel de France, I found myself speeding back to St Nazaire with a somewhat exhausted but triumphant little wife and three trunks full of feminine adornments, and in front of me the task of finding Vaurel, and a lurking fear as to how matters might be with him when I did find him.

I convoyed my wife and her spoils on board the yacht, commended her to Lyle's most careful keeping, arranged with him to be off the mouth of the Vilaine by six o'clock next morning, and then just managed to catch a train for Redon, and dropped off at Bessancy Station shortly after nine o'clock.

The night air was cool, and there was a fine rain falling, but I turned up my coat collar and walked briskly along the high-road towards Cour-des-Comptes.

I did not meet a soul all the way, and when at last I turned into the Château grounds and the house stood below me, all dark and silent, my anxieties were at a fine point, for a few minutes more would tell me how the land lay.

(To be continued.)

THE MONTH: SCIENCE AND ARTS.

SIBERIA.



REPORT on the Trans-Siberian Railway, prepared in a most able manner by Mr Cooke, British commercial agent in Russia, has been issued by the Foreign Office, and it is no exaggeration to say that it is of the greatest importance to all having trade interests. Here will be found, stated in plain terms, the present condition of Siberia,

and a full account of the new railway, which will, when the present crisis in the East is over, bring into closer touch with Europe and America four hundred and fifty millions of Chinese and Japanese. But in Siberia itself there are vast commercial possibilities. The country will export enormous quantities of coal and grain, and will want in return all kinds of machinery, implements, and appliances. Among these Mr Cooke names rails and rolling-stock, shipping craft, boring apparatus and other

mining requisites, agricultural implements, building material, electric plant, dairy apparatus, and manufactured goods of all kinds. In Siberia the villages are rapidly developing into large towns, and the needs of the inhabitants will expand at a rapid rate. British manufacturers can get a large portion of this trade if they are careful, and if they remember that there are Continental and American competitors to deal with.

THE WASTEFULNESS OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT.

In a thoughtful paper in *Cassier's Magazine*, Dr John Henderson deplors the wastefulness of present means of artificial lighting, more especially with reference to gas, and regards it as strange that, although so many have worked at the problem of obtaining cheap light, we are, at the end of the nineteenth century, so far behindhand. The efficiency of the steam-engine and of the dynamo has increased enormously during the past twenty years; but in the production of artificial light we have made but small advance during the same period. Out of every hundred tons of coal delivered at our gasworks something like ninety-eight tons are wasted so far as the production of light is concerned, and appear as useless heat. Nature has by some mysterious process, of which we have not yet learnt the secret, solved the problem of economical light. In the fire-fly we find a means by which abundant illumination is produced without the expenditure of any radiant heat discoverable by the most delicate instruments. When the physiological chemist can find out the means by which this little creature affords so much illumination, we shall be much nearer the solution of a problem of vast importance to mankind.

SAWDUST BRIQUETTES.

A method of converting sawdust into an admirable fuel has been introduced at the sawmills of Joseph Fialla, Austria, and the briquettes so produced are found to be valuable both for boiler furnaces and the domestic hearth. The process by which the sawdust is converted into this highly marketable product is as follows: After being impregnated with tarry compounds and heated to a certain temperature, the sawdust is passed over a metal plate heated by steam on its way to a screw-press, where the mixture is compressed into briquettes of convenient size. The factory turns out more than six million briquettes per annum, at a cost of about eightpence per thousand, the selling price being about four shillings for the same quantity. It is thus evident that the refuse of a large sawmill, which used to be regarded almost as so much waste, can be turned to very profitable account. The size of these sawdust briquettes is somewhat less than that of a common brick, and their heating value is about equal to that of

lignite, but they leave only about 4 per cent. of ash. There are many mills in this country where a similar industry could be established with advantage, especially at this time of dear coal.

TRANSMITTING ELECTRICITY WITHOUT LOSS.

In *Chambers* for last month appeared an article, 'Some Forecasts of Science,' giving an abstract of a remarkable paper by Nikola Tesla on the 'Problem of Increasing Human Energy.' This great electrician has made another discovery, or an ingenious combination of previous discoveries, as termed by the *Spectator*, to which we are indebted for an abstract. When electricity is sent long distances there is great loss of power; the conducting metal becomes hot, and the heat develops resistance. Professor Dewar and Professor Fleming are able to liquefy oxygen, air, and hydrogen, and these liquid gases have been found to have a very remarkable action upon metals cooled in them. This diminution of heat means a corresponding diminution of electrical resistance. Availing himself of this knowledge, Tesla proposes to carry a metal tube, immersed in a trough containing sawdust and water, and placed six feet below the surface, as far from the source of power as may be wanted. Through this surrounding material he will force a current of liquid gas, which will freeze the enclosed metal, and thus neutralise the heat generated by the passage of the electric current. In this way he hopes that no appreciable amount of electricity will be wasted in transmission.

MEAT PRESERVATION.

An improved process of meat preservation, the invention of a German engineer, is said to have given such good results experimentally that a trial shipment from Buenos Ayres has been arranged for. The meat is not treated with chemicals, but is enclosed in air-tight sterilised chambers, in which it is said to be perfectly preserved for an indefinite period. In the experiments referred to, freshly-killed meat, bones, and marrow were shut up in such a receptacle on 19th May, and sealed by the Minister of Agriculture at Buenos Ayres. A month later the chamber was opened by the same functionary, and its contents were found to be in perfect condition. Fuller details of the process will be awaited with interest, for at present it is difficult to see how the meat itself is sterilised innocuously without the usual boiling operation. Should the system be really effective it will have far-reaching applications, and will be a great boon to mankind.

CHEAPER GAS.

Dear coal necessarily means dear gas, and the complaints are many that the gas companies have raised their tariff from 20 to 25 per cent. In a recent paragraph we quoted the suggestion of

Professor Sylvanus Thompson that a non-luminous gas, highly suitable for cooking purposes or for employment in incandescent burners, should be supplied at a cheap rate. This gas could be rendered luminous by the addition of a hydro-carbon by the consumer. Such gas, which can be cheaply manufactured from the decomposition of water, is now extensively made in America; and Professor Chandler, in his presidential address to the Society of Chemical Industry, alluded to its employment in very hopeful terms. It seems that the question of its use came before the Health Department of New York, which, after careful investigation, decided in its favour. At present in America there are five hundred factories using this gas either wholly or in part; and last year it was estimated that three-quarters of the entire consumption consisted of carburetted water-gas. It is believed that such gas, under favourable conditions, could be sold for less than half the sum charged for coal-gas at its cheapest.

SNAKE-STONES.

There is a 'snake-stone' used by lithographers; but it is not of that well-known mineral that Mr Schwartz treats in his interesting communication to *Nature*. The snake-stones to which he refers are common in South Africa, and are described as white, porous substances; they are employed for the cure of snake-bite. When applied to the place where the reptile has bitten its victim, the stone is believed by the natives to draw the poison from the wound, after which the stone is left in a bath of milk, which withdraws the venom from the mineral, rendering it once more ready for use. It is a common belief that these stones originate in the head of a snake, and that they are analogous to bone; but a more reasonable suggestion is that they consist of pumice, which to an uneducated eye would seem to possess the structure of bone. In Germany it is no uncommon thing for credulous persons to carry about with them small nuggets of gold, which they believe have the virtue of drawing out from their bodies the evils induced by malignant influences. Sometimes a potato is carried with the same intent; and the belief in the virtues of the snake-stone seems to be of the same kind. Possibly the tradition is merely a survival of the old belief in the medicinal value of different minerals and precious stones, each having a specific effect upon the constitution of the person owning or carrying it.

THE SWIFTEST VESSEL AFLOAT.

Her Majesty's ship *Viper*, built at Newcastle for the British fleet of torpedo vessels, has once more afforded evidence of the value of the steam turbine system. At her trials on the measured mile she reached the extraordinary speed of forty-three miles an hour, a rate of progress which would not disgrace an express train on our

railways. Indeed, there are many lines in this country whose customers would be only too glad if something a good deal less than this speed could be guaranteed to them. It is certain that the turbine system is yet quite in its infancy, and that before long the Channel will be crossed by vessels propelled in this manner. Some, indeed, prophesy that the old methods with crank and piston-rod will be superseded altogether by this notable invention of the Hon. Charles A. Parsons. A feature of a turbine-driven vessel is absence of vibration, a quality which, apart from any question of speed, is a highly desirable one. In the trial of the *Viper* the steam pressure was two hundred pounds to the square inch. Now that the London County Council are considering the question of a new fleet of passenger steamers for the Thames, they will doubtless not fail to give due attention to the suitability of the turbine system for that purpose.

FIREPROOFING WOOD.

The large conflagrations which have occurred with appalling frequency of late years would have been impossible had the woodwork of the structures involved been rendered fireproof by one of the excellent processes now available. In the Ferrell process, so called because it has been invented and worked out by Mr Joseph Ferrell of Philadelphia, the wood to be treated is enclosed in a metallic chamber capable of resisting enormous internal pressure, and a chemically-charged fluid is forced into its pores by hydraulic means. Under this treatment the wood gains in weight, but can be as easily worked as before, while its capability of being varnished, polished, or painted is by no means impaired. At the same time, it is rendered so absolutely fireproof that a bonfire made of its shavings will refuse to burn; while a box constructed of the protected wood is, according to all reports, as serviceable against fire as a steel safe.

LIQUID AIR COMPANIES.

We have received the prospectus of a company which boldly states that liquid air 'will within a few years, if not months, supersede steam, electricity, compressed air, gasoline, and all other powers now in use.' Liquid air is, without doubt, one of the most wonderful products of modern times, and we do not yet know what great things may result from its employment; but these will be in the field of scientific research and not in the shape of commercial enterprise. In the prospectus referred to, the compiler carefully refrains from making any comparison between the efficiency and cost of liquid air as opposed to steam, and this is a curious omission, seeing that such a statement would at once give the reader information which he would greatly value. We will try to supply this omission. Taking the cost of a pound of liquid air as one penny—the estimate of

an American producer who has done much to encourage company promotion in this direction—we find that this will expand to eight hundred times its volume in assuming the aeriform condition; but the same quantity of water will expand to sixteen hundred and forty-five times its volume when assuming the form of steam; and as a good steam-raising apparatus will turn a pound of water into vapour at a cost of about the two-hundred-and-fortieth part of a penny, the conclusion is obvious that liquid air cannot compete with steam as a motive-power.

THE BANEFUL MOSQUITO.

While the question of the responsibility of the mosquito in spreading malaria is yet undetermined, pending the experiments now in progress, information comes from the second malarial expedition of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine that the germ which is the cause of the terrible malady known as elephantiasis has been discovered in the proboscis of the same insect. The same discovery seems to have been made simultaneously by Dr Low in England, in mosquitoes brought from Australia, and by Captain James in India, so that there is strong presumption that the case against the mosquito is proved. We see little of the deformities caused by elephantiasis in this country; but in tropical climates thousands fall victims to the disease, and its extirpation would be an enormous boon. Professor Koch regards the extermination of the infecting gnats, which would be a radical remedy, as quite impracticable on a large scale. The only practical method of dealing with malaria, he considers, is that of rendering it innocuous by thoroughly curing patients, as has already been done in cases of cholera, plague, and typhus.

A NEW FRUIT.

At a recent meeting of the Royal Horticultural Society a new fruit, a hybrid between the raspberry and the blackberry, made its first bow to

the public. This product, which promises to be of great value, was raised by Messrs Veitch, and has been named by them the 'Mahdi.' The Mahdi bears a general resemblance to the blackberry of our hedges, and in cultivation is trained in the same manner, while its taste reminds one of the raspberry. As its time of bearing comes about when the raspberry fails, and before the blackberry is ripe, the Mahdi fills in a gap just where it is needed; but it will not be ready for the market until next season. The new fruit is prolific, and has a handsome decorative appearance.

FUEL FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

The high price of coal has had one good effect in directing attention to the possibility of maintaining fire by alternative methods. Peat has been spoken of over and over again as a substitute for coal, but it has not yet penetrated very far from the moors upon which it is found. However, the great rise in the price of coal has stimulated effort, and at the present moment there are several companies which profess to come to the rescue of the perplexed householder. The Peat Fuel Company offer sun-dried peat in blocks, and assert that a small quantity mixed with coal will prolong the life of the latter by more than 50 per cent. Another peat company at Dartmouth, Devon, will presently put a cheap fuel on the market. The Whittington Peat Coal Syndicate, of London, carbonise dried peat, and also offer peat gas for house use. Another process enables Captain Hood to dig up peat one day, and present it ready for use the next morning. This product will cost fifty shillings a ton in London; but one ton will last as long as five tons of coal! Another sanguine inventor makes dust and house refuse into a serviceable fuel. Sterilised sewage is the foundation of another patent fuel; while a factory is being erected in Essex for the making of yet another from the mud of the Thames!

THE MOORISH TREASURE.

CHAPTER V.



SUDDENLY a sound struck Wooly's ear—a sound most welcome, although astonishing. He could not be mistaken. He heard far along the passage before him the music of running water. He could hear the splash and gurgle, and so could Jack, to his immense joy also. For the latter's tongue was lolling out with thirst, and Wooly himself craved for a drink as he had never craved before, even on the polo-grounds of India or the sandy wastes of Egypt. So eager was he that he broke

into a run at the imminent risk of extinguishing his candle; and ere many minutes had elapsed he found himself on the brink of a most serious obstacle to his escape, and one not marked or shown in any way upon his map. It was water indeed—any amount of it: too much, in fact. It was very nice to drink. He soon settled that question; but in spite of the huge relief it gave him, he wished it had been anywhere but just where it was.

From an opening in the roof of the tunnel, rather to one side, a large and strong stream

poured down with tremendous force into a deep pool that it apparently had cut out for itself in the passage floor. This pool was of considerable length, and the torrent filled it with a wild turmoil of water that rushed violently along and disappeared at the farther end as suddenly as it had sprung from the rock above. Through the cloud of fine spray that filled the air, Wooly could dimly make out the tunnel that seemed to still continue its even upward course beyond the point where the water ended; so he concluded that the latter either found its way down a branch passage, or—disquieting idea—fell headlong down a shaft in the floor of the main one. If the latter, he might find it impossible to cross the well. It would be big, he knew, to be able to take such a volume of water so suddenly and quietly; at all events he must get into the pool and explore it at once. He would require all his strength and nerve for the job, and after all he had gone through he did not feel very fit. His stock of candles was getting unpleasantly low also, and he shuddered as he thought of himself exhausted and in darkness; nothing could save him then. Carefully he entered the water. Ugh! how cold it was as it crept higher and higher up his legs!

'Stay there, Jack,' he cried to the dog, 'while I explore this cold bath;' and, all obedience now, Jack stayed.

Shivering and grumbling, the A.D.C. moved slowly along. The water was up to his waist now, but didn't appear to get deeper. He kept close to the side, thus avoiding the full force of the fall by passing under it, and held on to any knobs or ledges that he could find. But he had all his work cut out for him in endeavouring to keep his candle alight under such difficult circumstances, and he wished that he possessed at least double the number of hands, and an extra foot or two as well.

When at last he reached the other end, which he did with his precious candle still alight, he saw with a sinking heart that his worst fears were verified. He found that the stream rushed violently down, not quite a perpendicular shaft, but a very steeply sloping passage which went *under* the main one, the one that led to deliverance. There it was close to him, with the steep water-chute beneath, going down into the depths with such strength and rapidity that he saw at once that it would be a most hazardous, if not impossible, feat to get down the slope sufficiently far to grasp the jagged lower edge of the upper tunnel and climb into it in safety. But there was no other way out of the fix, and so the effort had to be made.

Wooly could not understand where this water flowed out from the rock. He could imagine a spring far down inside, unknown and unsuspected; but it must have an outlet of some kind, he knew. Yet, except rain-water, there was not a drop nearer than Spain. Why, this spring would be a fortune

to anybody in itself could it be tapped. He had thirsty recollections of water being sold at three-pence a pail in dry seasons. However, he had no time now to speculate on these strange secrets of nature. He had a tough job to get through, and must hurry; and thus thinking, he turned round in order to fetch Jack, who of course had to go through with it as well as his master. But that perverse animal had had enough waiting already, and even as Wooly turned the little brute sprang into the pool with a yelp, and proceeded to swim vigorously towards him. But the current was strong. It was as much as Wooly could do to keep his feet, and in an instant the dog was upon him. Like a flash he saw that his little friend must be swept past him unless he could seize him; and, loosing his hold of the friendly knob, he made a dash at the struggling animal. That instant his feet were swept from under him like bits of cork, and down he went into the rushing water. There was a gurgling cry, and for one brief black instant a desperate struggle for life, and then the waters swept on to their unknown bourn, and with them went the secret of the treasure, now lost to man for ever.

'Here, quick, give me the rifle. Look sharp, you idiot,' whispered one of the Duffer officers to his brother subaltern, Bob Scarlet, as these two individuals were cruising around the Rock in the early morning sun, taking flying-shots at the rock-pigeons as, scared by Bob's horrible howls, they whirled out of the water-caves at a rate that would try the metal of a Monte Carlo *Grand Prix* winner at least. 'I see a seal, man alive! There's his head sticking out just on that ledge of rock to the left there. Steady! That's it. Now, pull gently towards him, and I'll warm him up. How lucky I brought the rifle as well—eh? Oh, do shut that silly head of yours, and don't chuckle like that!'

'Can't see him myself; but I'll bet you a dollar you miff him all the same, fatty,' retorted Bob. 'That a seal! Why—hold hard,' he suddenly yelled. 'Don't shoot. Why, it's a man's head.' With that he started pulling as he had never pulled before, madly, frantically, and to such good purpose that before his companion had grasped the situation and, putting down the rifle, got out another pair of oars to help him, he had driven the boat up to the ledge. 'Why it's old Sheep! What the—? How the—? Why the— did he get here? I thought he had gone on leave last night. Is he dead? Here, fatty, you fat juggins, help me get his legs in. Are you struck silly? That's it; there he is. Now, lay him along there! By Jove! how he's cut about! What on earth can he have been up to, to get mauled about like that?' Thus wondering, the two got the poor battered body into the boat, covered it with coats, and then set to work to get home, rowing like galley-slaves.

Rosier Bay was the first available landing-place. It was soon reached, and a man of the guard there sent off for a doctor. Meanwhile they tried all they knew to produce some sign of life in the A.D.C., the men of the guard standing round, a sympathising group, offering respectful help and advice whenever they got a chance. Soon the doctor appeared, and by his orders Wooly was put on the guard-room stretcher and carried away to his own quarters near the Convent—as Governor's House is called—and presently, under skilful treatment, was brought back to life again, and then, under the influence of an opiate, went off into a long dreamless sleep.

When he awoke, hours after, the first voice he heard was that of the faithful Davie, who bade him lie quiet and not talk yet about his fall over the cliff. 'Doctor's horders, sir.'

Fall over the cliff! Could it be possible? Was that what had befallen him, and left him in this bruised and patched condition? Had he only dreamed those strange adventures in weird tunnels and wild waters that were crowding back into his still aching head? Was the treasure only the creation of a mind shaken by a bad accident? He was almost inclined to think so. Then he saw, out of the corner of his eye, Davie on his knees on the floor collecting something that appeared to be scattered over the carpet.

'What are you up to, Davie?' he asked suddenly.

'Collectin' a lot o' bits o' glass, sir,' Davie replied, 'that was rolled in yer 'andkerchief, as was in yer pocket. I'm afraid they'd cut yer feet, sir, when you get hup, so I'll just chuck 'em out o' winder, sir; hand'—

'Give them to me, Davie,' said his master, 'in the handkerchief;' and, to his man's wonderment, the A.D.C. placed the lot under his pillow and said no more; but he cogitated deeply. 'Fall from the cliff,' rang in his brain; and when, later on, he saw many sympathisers, he kept his own counsel, and accepted the theories of his fall that were suggested to him with silent acquiescence; though the good people of 'Gib' never could quite understand why his recollections of what led to his fall were so vague, and how two such active individuals as Jack and the 'Sheep' came to tumble over the cliff both together.

Jack never was seen again. He had reaped the reward of his many canine crimes, and, after leading his master to the threshold of death's door, had himself knocked and been admitted.

Wooly recovered completely, and went home for his leave after all, and had, as he said, a 'ripping good time.' Old Squarey and other bloodsuckers of the same kind were paid in full, much to their astonishment and disgust, for they had not half-squeezed him dry yet, and they thought it very hard lines indeed, especially as he never borrowed from them again.

What was also strange, a marriage came off ere

the leave was over; and when Mrs Wooly returned with her husband, her diamonds excited the admiration of all beholders. Never had such stones been seen on anybody under royal or millionaire rank before.

Wooly has no recollection of any of the events subsequent to his wild dash and struggle in the torrent. He supposes that it had its outlet under the sea in the recesses of a water-cave, and that he was shot up to the surface and carried or drifted out on to the rock on which he was found. His watch and chain still lie somewhere hidden in that mysterious stream, and with them the Moor's gift. Thus is the secret kept after all, and the treasure still awaits an owner.

Wooly and his wife have walked for hours and hours about the neighbourhood where the former first saw the monkeys, but no trace of a certain crack between two rocks could they ever find. The fall of earth must have completely filled it in; and as they are now at the other end of the world, they can't continue the search. But they live in hope.

The gunners still grub about their old castle; and the M.P. has not yet asked his question in the House, and thus the great injustice to the alien race continues, and is likely so to continue to the end of all time.

THE HOLIDAY.

He gave his eyes to the skies of blue,

His ears to the birds and bees;

And he gave his heart to the winds that flew

Away over empty seas;

And he saw the depths that he could not sound,

And he heard the unworldly songs;

And his heart, unfettered, fled past the bound

Of a tired life's rights and wrongs;

And he neither wrought nor played nor slept,

Nor troubled with good and ill;

And his dreams were vague as the scents that swept

And sweetened the lonely hill.

And there from morning till eve he lay,

And never a joy he sought.

But he came home glad at the close o' the day,

Because he had lived for nought.

J. J. BELL.

* * TO CONTRIBUTORS.

1st. All communications should be addressed 'To the Editor, 339 High Street, Edinburgh.'

2nd. For its return in case of ineligibility, postage-stamps should accompany every manuscript.

3rd. To secure their safe return if ineligible, ALL MANUSCRIPTS, whether accompanied by a letter of advice or otherwise, should have the writer's Name and Address written upon them in FULL.

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